

**TESTIMONY BY MARJORIE BANNER, TRUSTEE,
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF NORTHVILLE, MICHIGAN
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 4007**

I am here today to express my support for HB 4007 on behalf of my constituents in Northville Township.

HB 4007 has been created to limit the circumstances in which an annexation can occur. Historically, annexation has proven to be problematic for both municipalities and the State. It fosters an unequal decision-making process, maintains a flawed system that is prone to exploitation, and exacerbates discord among neighboring municipalities.

This issue is significant to Northville Township because of a firsthand experience that occurred in 2008. Northville Township fought an annexation attempt by a neighboring City for the former Northville Regional Psychiatric Hospital site. The Township approved a developer's project with stipulations, however, rather than comply with the Township's request's, the company believed their interests would be better served if annexed by the City. Eventually, when the annexation of this property was put to a vote, only eight Northville Township citizens were eligible to vote. After a long process, this complex effort was defeated, but it left Northville Township concerned about its future.

This annexation dispute demonstrates the biased voting practices involved in this flawed process. While our community was largely affected by the issue at hand, we had little say in whether or not our property should be annexed. This is a strong example of how annexation can be exploited both by businesses and municipalities. For the developer, annexation was a handy tool to avoid township ordinances. For the City, this process was deemed an easy way to add a tax base thereby increasing revenues. Both had disingenuous intentions and did not put the common good of the citizens first.

As with most annexation battles, the 2008 annexation dispute became the root cause of conflict between neighboring local units of government. Limiting the circumstances in which annexation can take place would foster stronger intergovernmental relations and advance opportunities for economic development.

Let's be clear, this is not just a Northville Township issue. Many communities across our state have experienced this issue over the years and it seems to only surface in a significant way, when communities are already in the middle of a vicious dispute. The current law has been manipulated in a way that was not envisioned and has put entire communities at risk. As a township with first-hand experience, we unfortunately, have a strong familiarity with the laws flawed nature. When the law was written, it was meant to protect townships that were not economically viable because of their size. Now it is being used to extort them as a tool for a developer to find more affable zoning ordinances.

Finally, the Governor's Administration has made municipal cooperation a key priority, but annexation does nothing to further this plan. Not only does it fuel antagonistic relationships between municipalities, but it also fosters an unfair system in which townships and cities have unequal rights where annexation is concerned.

Let's deal with this issue factually and work together to identify a common solution that works for the benefit of all.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this issue.